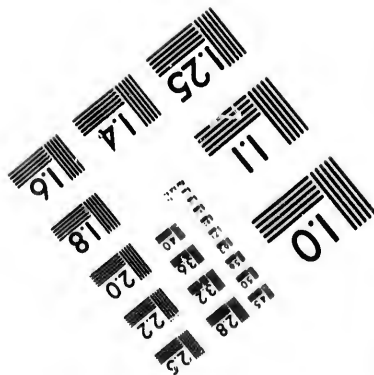
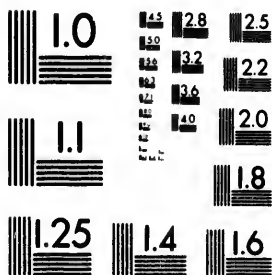


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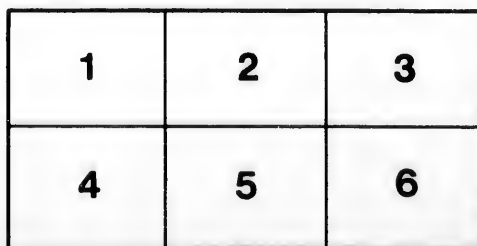
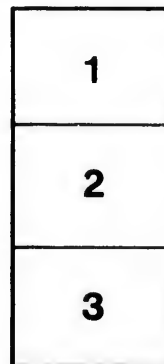
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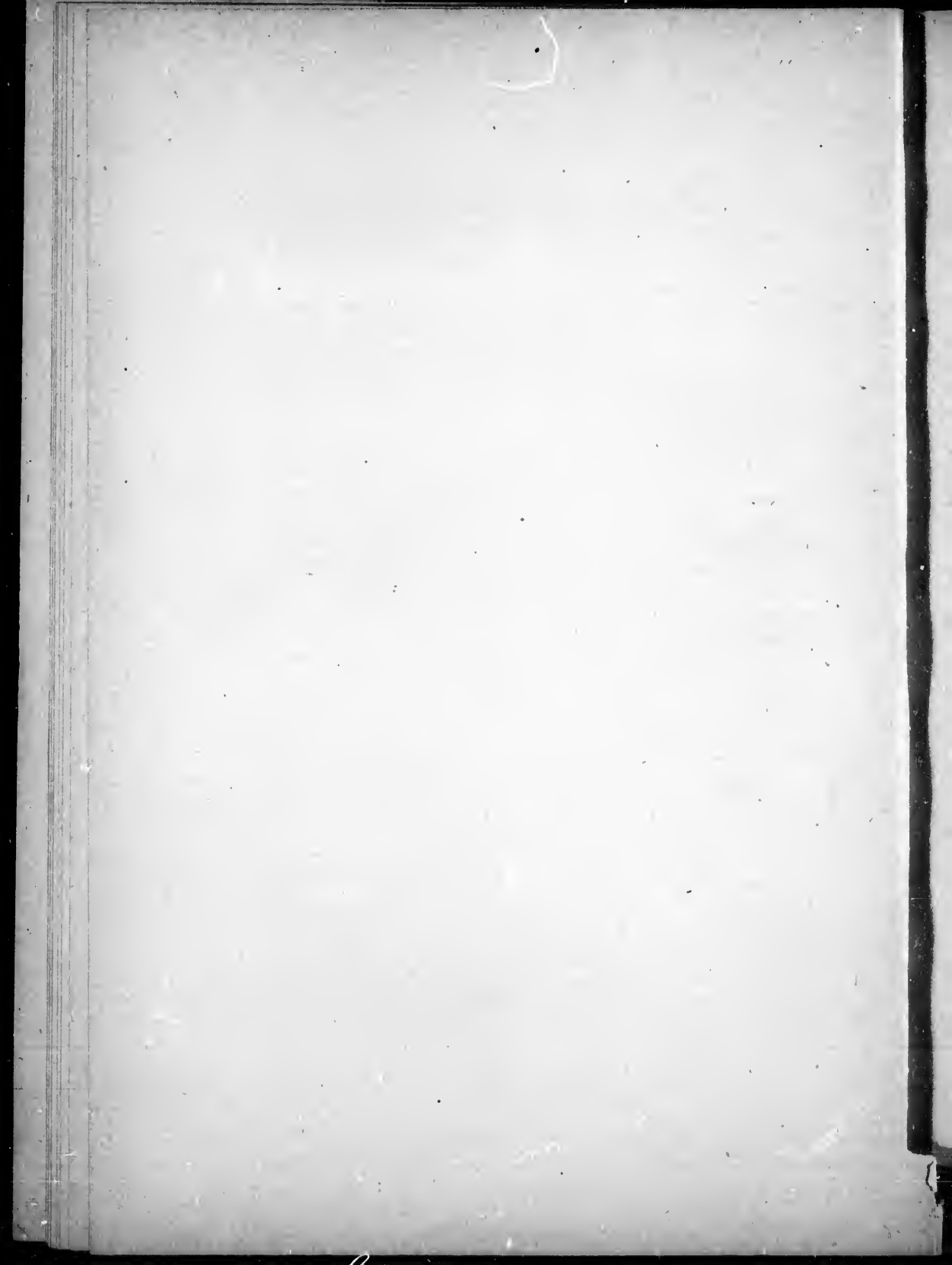
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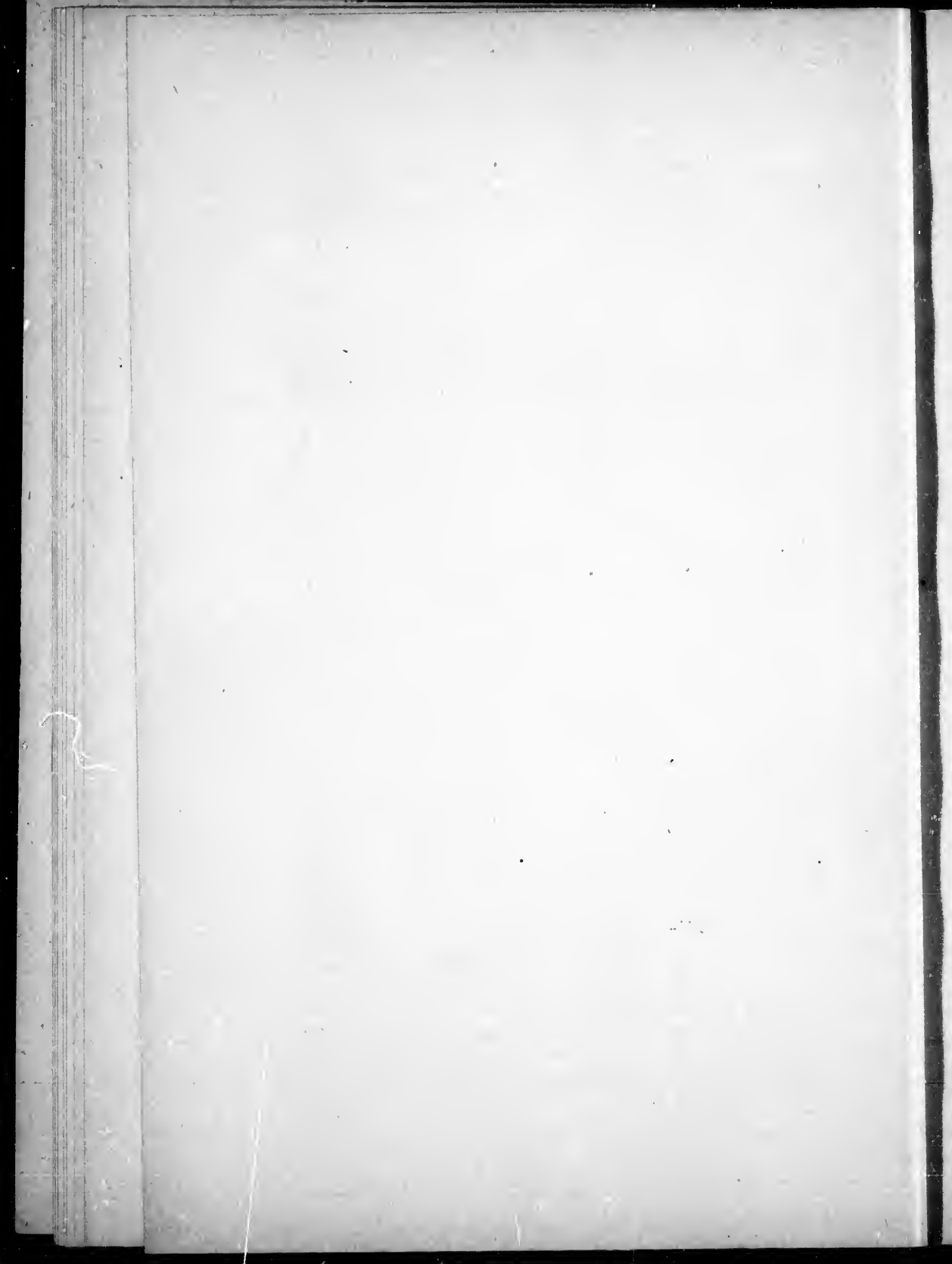
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BY SANDFORD FLEMING.



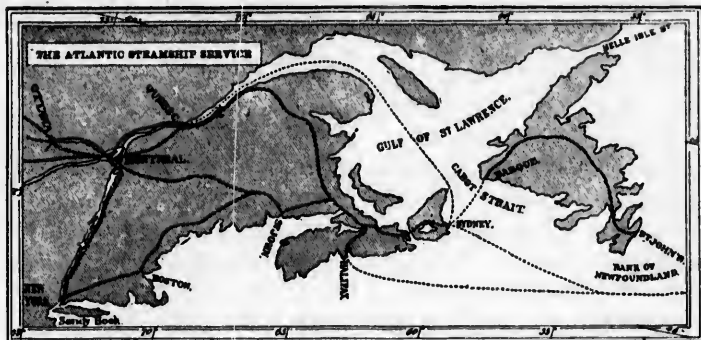
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OUR ATLANTIC STEAMSHIP SERVICE.

III.



SINCE the publication of my two papers on the Atlantic Steamship service, a provisional contract has been entered into with a responsible firm for the establishment of the long contemplated "Fast line": In this agreement the executive has not declared itself in favour of the extreme northern route. The Straits of Belle Isle have not been named, and there is nothing in the terms of the contract to prevent the adoption of conditions, in my view of paramount importance. Prominent among these conditions is the establishment of a "port of call" during the open season on the eastern Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia, such as in a previous communication I have taken upon myself to advocate.

In the two papers which have appeared I did not enter into the circumstances which led me to investigate the subject. I conceived that it was neither necessary nor expedient so to do. I have, however, been advised that the facts by which I have been influenced are not without importance. On this theory I am impelled to submit them to public attention as a continuation of what has been already submitted by me on the subject.

On September 21st, 1895, my youngest son embarked at Montreal, with many other passengers, on board the steamship "Mariposa," of the Dominion line, for Liverpool. Three days afterwards, in a dense fog, the vessel while steaming at the rate of 5 or $5\frac{1}{2}$ knots an hour was wrecked in the Straits of Belle Isle. The official enquiry, afterwards instituted, elicited the fact that the officers of the ship considered it dangerous to proceed at a greater speed than 5 or $5\frac{1}{2}$ knots, owing to icebergs. In this instance, notwithstanding the caution exercised, the steamship "Mariposa" became a total wreck.

On August 6th, 1896, I myself embarked at Liverpool on the steamship "Sarlinian," of the Allan line, for Quebec. On the evening of August 12th, when nearly 300 miles off Belle Isle, we experienced a fog so dense that the captain deemed it prudent to stop the engines.

The ship made no progress during the night. On the following morning the fog lifted and revealed to those on board an immense iceberg directly in front of the vessel. Had we struck the iceberg, even at moderate speed, a disaster of the most serious kind would inevitably have resulted. Certainly nothing could have saved a 20 knot passenger steamship at full speed, dashing against such a formidable obstruction.

When a Fast Service through the Straits of Belle Isle was being strongly advocated, and when Parliament had granted a large subsidy in favour of the project, these two circumstances forcibly directed my attention to the matter. They brought back to the memory other occurrences on the Belle Isle route which trans-Atlantic travellers will not soon forget: among them collisions with icebergs by the steamships "Lake Superior," "Lake Nepigon" and "Vancouver" between 1890 and 1894, the total wreck on Belle Isle of the steamships "Mexico" in 1895 and "Montreal" in 1889, and at an earlier date the crushing by ice and sinking of the steamship "Canadian," of the Allan line, the second of the name, at the entrance of the Straits.

The knowledge of these occurrences in the same locality, apparently proceeding from the same causes, awakened in my mind the desire, from a sense of public duty, to make a careful study of the whole question. My object was to ascertain, how far it would be possible to prevent such accidents and avoid great risks,

in establishing a Canadian fast steamship service worthy of the name. After a full investigation, it seemed to me proper to make known the conclusions that irresistibly forced themselves upon my mind.

The evidence goes to show that the obstacles to safe navigation at high speed on the Belle Isle Route are icebergs in thick weather. The prevalence of such weather is indicated by the fog tables in my first paper. All testimony establishes that frequently the approaches to the Straits, and the Straits themselves, are beset with icebergs, and that indeed they are never entirely absent. As icebergs are continually moved by currents it is not possible, unless they drift aground, to predetermine their position. If they remained stationary their exact place could be shown on charts, and means could be taken to give warning of danger to approaching vessels. But no system has yet been devised by which a sea pervaded for hundreds of miles by icebergs can be navigated at any speed, with safety, in thick weather.

It has been argued that steamships can proceed slowly through the iceberg region, and especially during the periods, so common, when the dangers are concealed by fog. Such a principle of caution however admirable in itself would not fulfil the purposes of a fast line; moreover as in the case of the S. S. "Mariposa," which I have cited, the speed reduced even to 5 or 5½ knots is not a guarantee against disaster.

As the strength of a chain is determined by its weakest link, the navigation of the Straits of Belle Isle may be held to determine the character of the northern route, and the only logical conclusion is, that, the use or disuse of that route between Montreal or Quebec and Great Britain, will eventually determine the failure or success of the Canadian Line of Fast Steamships; for obviously the loss of a "Lucania" or a "Teutonic" on a passage through the Straits of Belle Isle would be fatal to the enterprise, in its hold on public favour and patronage.

In my second paper I pointed out that if in place of following the route by the Straits of Belle Isle, the steamships are required to pass through the Cabot Straits, the objection I have raised would, if not entirely, to a large extent be removed. The difference between the two routes may be briefly stated. Icebergs on

the Cabot Strait route can be avoided by a sufficient deflection to the south, while on the northern route there is no escape from them, for it traverses the region in which they are so frequently met. The northern route is the shorter by about 170 miles, a saving of distance which would give an advantage of 8 or 9 hours over the southern route, provided that full speed can be maintained. As full speed cannot be maintained without a concurrence of favourable conditions such as the non-prevalence of icebergs, absence of fog with clear nights, it is obvious that the gain in time can rarely be realized. This important consideration must be earnestly weighed. The northern route has the one possible advantage only, that a few hours may occasionally be saved on the whole voyage when every condition is favourable. Is this one possible advantage sufficient to counterpoise the tremendous risks to which fast passenger steamships, in navigating the Belle Isle route, would so seriously and so frequently be exposed? I am myself unable to answer that question in the affirmative.

In the event of the southern route being chosen as the one to be followed, the establishment of a "port of call" near Cabot Strait, would involve but little delay to steamships running between Montreal or Quebec and Liverpool; on the other hand it would be fraught with many benefits.

Few can refuse to admit that the people of the three Maritime Provinces—New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia—have strong claims to be considered in the determination of this problem. With the establishment of a "port of call" at or near Cabot Strait, they will simply be placed in a corresponding position in relation to the "Fast Line" to the people of Quebec and Ontario. Without this arrangement, in order to cross the Atlantic, they will be forced to take a long journey westward to Quebec or Montreal, in order to embark on an eastward bound steamship; or, indeed, they might, in many cases, find it more convenient to proceed *via* New York; in either case entailing expense, fatigue and loss of time. This unnecessary tax on the people of these Provinces, going and returning from Europe, would be removed, or greatly diminished, by the establishment of an eastern "port of call."

Another important consideration presents itself: the claim of

Newfoundland on the Dominion of Canada. This ancient colony at this date is not one of the Canadian Provinces. She is, however, a sister Province under the same sovereign, and has relationships to us, of which we should never lose sight. A "port of call" for our trans-Atlantic fast steamships established near the entrance to the Gulf would extend the greatest benefit to Newfoundland. On the other hand, such a policy would occasion but little delay, and would cost the Dominion nothing.

Is it not the duty of Canada, from the prominence of her position in the British Imperial system, to extend a helping hand in this instance? No one will deny that this important question should be considered in a proper spirit. There is, indeed, an extreme probability, when it is submitted to practical examination by the Imperial and Dominion authorities, that the views I have presented will not escape observation, and that the establishment of an eastern "port of call" will be determined on some such principle as that indicated.

While the establishment of a "port of call" convenient to Cabot Straits would confer great advantages to the community; and especially to the Maritime Provinces and Newfoundland, it would at the same time materially advance the interests of the Steamship Company. The arrangement would certainly secure to the new line the passenger and mail traffic of Newfoundland, which it would otherwise lose; moreover, without it, a considerable proportion of the passengers of the Maritime Provinces would continue to find it more convenient to take the trans-Atlantic steamship at Boston or New York than at Montreal or Quebec. With the means of embarking and disembarking on the eastern seaboard of Nova Scotia, and securing an ocean voyage two days less than by New York, the conditions would be so changed that the Canadian Fast Line would obtain all the passenger traffic from these Provinces. These considerations must appeal to the business men composing the Steamship Company, and receive their ready assent to the proposal. When all parties would benefit there should be no difficulty in carrying it out. A "port of call" near Cabot Straits may not be prescribed by the letter of the contract, but it is quite in accord with its spirit *vide 2 (b)*.

If Sydney be constituted during the summer months the "port

of call," a steam ferry to Port aux Basque would connect it directly with the Trunk Line of Railway through Newfoundland, and would result in giving to that colony a position as nearly as possible corresponding with that of one of our Maritime Provinces.

An examination of the plate at the head of this article, showing the relative position of Newfoundland and the Eastern Provinces of Canada, with the existing lines of railway and the proposed steamship route, will make the proposal clear. It will be obvious how much the suggested combination of great lines of communication by land and sea will tend to consolidate British interests on this continent.

The contract is to extend over ten years, a period sufficiently long for the settlement of several questions bearing on rapid trans-Atlantic navigation, which I have referred to in this and my two previous papers. I will only add that if the views I have expressed respecting the northern St. Lawrence route are not in harmony with preconceived opinions, they are, nevertheless, based on the most accurate information obtainable, and they have been deliberately formed after consultation with experienced sea captains long in command of Canadian mail steamers. I have endeavoured to present the facts and opinions thus gathered clearly and concisely. For the estimation in which they may be held I am content to trust to the verdict of the future.

Regarded simply as an experiment, the step taken by the Government in entering into this contract must be held to be of great national importance.

SANDFORD FLEMING.

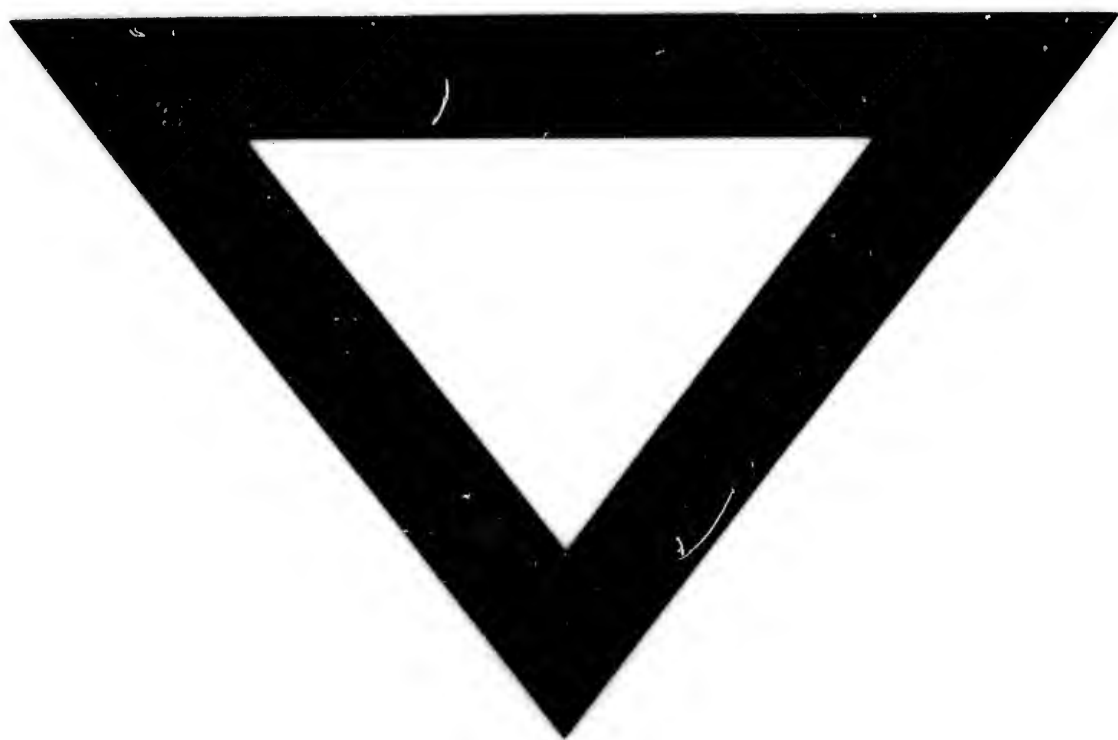
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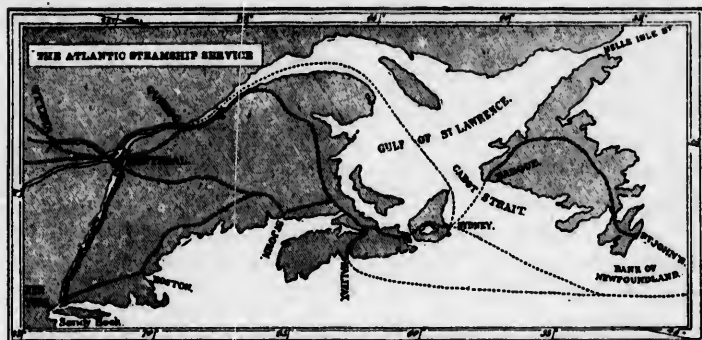
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OUR ATLANTIC STEAMSHIP SERVICE.

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